

97-84103-17

Cincinnatus Association

An analysis of 11,180
misdemeanor cases

[Cincinnati]

1929

97-84103-17

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... An analysis of 11,180 misdemeanor cases ...
(Cincinnati, Cincinnati bureau of governmental
research, 1929,
11, 1, p. diagrs. 23rd. (Cincinnati bureau
of governmental research. Pamphlet no. 6)

"This study, which is here presented in summary
form, was sponsored and financed by the Crime
committee of the Cincinnatus association."

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mmREDUCTION RATIO: 10:1IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIBDATE FILMED: 5/30/97INITIALS: JLM

TRACKING # :

24757

FILMED BY PRESERVATION RESOURCES, BETHLEHEM, PA.

Cincinnati Bureau of Governmental Research

312 West Ninth Street

Pamphlet No. 6

December, 1929

308

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Box 392

An Analysis of 11,180 Misdemeanor Cases

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by the

CRIME COMMITTEE

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CINCINNATUS ASSOCIATION

PREFACE

The Bureau first entered the field of criminal justice in 1926 when a survey was made of the Cincinnati Police Department at the request of the City Manager. Then followed an analysis of one year's felony arrests undertaken at the suggestion of County Prosecutor Charles P. Taft, II. One result of these studies was a realization of the need of a modern record system. In 1928 the Bureau co-operated with the Police Department in the design and installation of such a system.

With the record system in operation the facts of criminal justice became much more accessible. There was an opportunity to make a study which had been under consideration for some time—a study of misdemeanor cases. The analysis of felony cases had been illuminating but the misdemeanor study promised to be more so. With misdemeanor cases we would come closer to the basic causes of crime and we would have a sufficiently large number of cases to give considerable validity to the conclusions.

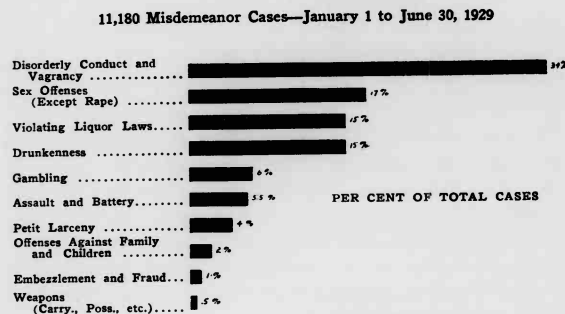
In June, 1929, this study was made possible through the efforts of the Crime Committee of the Cincinnati Association. The six months' period of January first to July first, 1929, was selected and all misdemeanor arrests—exclusive of violation of municipal ordinances—were analyzed from the records of the Cincinnati Police Department. The results of this analysis are summarized in this pamphlet. A complete report is now in process of preparation.

Another step is about to be taken. Realizing that the problem of criminal justice has wider ramifications than the boundaries of any one community, a police survey of the Cincinnati region is to be made. In this effort the Crime Committee of the Cincinnati Association has taken the initiative and through its efforts, surrounding municipalities have agreed to participate. The survey will start immediately.

What Are the Misdemeanor Offenses Coming Before the Municipal Court?

Do They Suggest Any Method of Crime Prevention?

FIG. 1—DISTRIBUTION OF MISDEMEANOR CASES
ACCORDING TO CHARGE OF ARREST



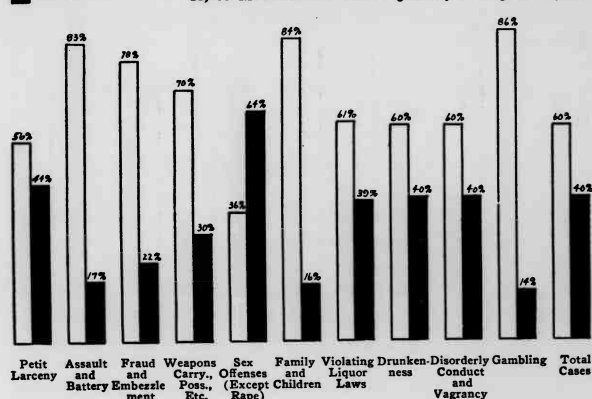
A study of Figure 1 shows that disorderly conduct and vagrancy, which is double the next highest charge, comprises one-third of the total number of cases. Disorderly conduct and vagrancy covers a multitude of sins and might rightfully be labeled the bottom rung of the criminal ladder.

The next largest number of charges is for sex offenses. These offenses for the most part are common prostitute cases and the court docket is crowded daily with repeating offenders.

Violating liquor laws and drunkenness are two charges that bear heavily upon the time of the municipal court officials. Each charge comprises fifteen per cent of the total cases tried and the two together, nearly one-third of the cases.

The four charges above comprise over eighty per cent of the total cases. The reason for the percentage of embezzlement, fraud, and carrying of concealed weapons being so low is that these charges are for the most part classified as felonies.

FIG. 2—CHARGES ANALYZED BY EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT
Per Cent of Charge
11,180 Misdemeanor Cases—January 1 to June 30, 1929



What Effect Does Unemployment Have on the Committing of Misdemeanor Offenses?

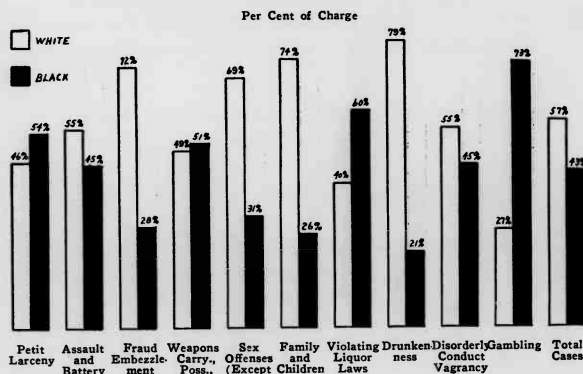
What Is the Proportion of Employment and Unemployment For Each Charge?

According to Figure 2, it appears that unemployment plays a big role in the committing of misdemeanor offenses. This is especially so in the case of petit larceny, sex offenses, violating liquor laws, drunkenness, and disorderly conduct and vagrancy. These charges comprise ninety per cent of the total number of cases.

Sex offenses seem to be decidedly more frequent among the unemployed class, whereas, gambling, offenses against family and children, fraud and embezzlement, and assault and battery, show up a large percentage in the employed class. This tendency appears logical in both cases. It is surprising to note that forty per cent of the drunkenness cases are committed by the unemployed.

In studying Figure 2, it is well to keep in mind that 40% of all misdemeanor arrests are of the unemployed class, which comprise only 8% of the total population of Cincinnati. The unemployment percentage figure was obtained by the Department of Welfare through the Board of Education and is for the month of May, 1929.

FIG. 3—CHARGES ANALYZED BY COLOR
11,180 Misdemeanor Cases—January 1 to June 30, 1929



Are Either of the Two Color Groups Predisposed Toward Particular Kinds of Offenses?

What Is the Proportion of the Two Color Groups for Each Charge?

According to Figure 3, it would appear that the two color groups are partial to different offenses. Violating liquor laws and gambling show a much higher percentage of the colored group than of the white.

On the other hand the white group seems to predominate the offenses against family and children, sex offenses, drunkenness, and fraud and embezzlement. This last charge is logically expected to show a higher percentage from the white group.

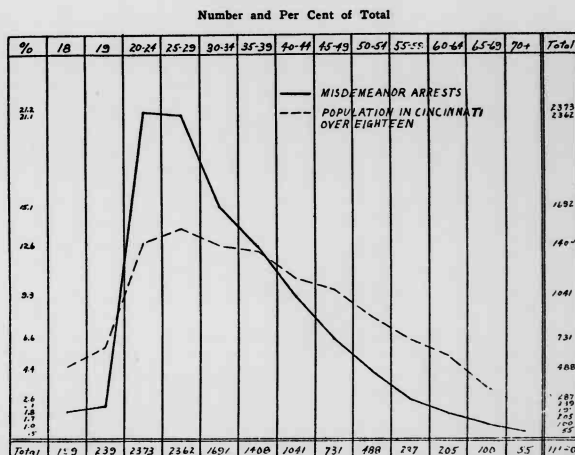
No logical tendency seems to prevail in other arrests. Assaults and disorderly conduct are more often white, whereas petit larcenies are more frequently colored.

In studying Figure 3, it is well to keep in mind that 43% of all misdemeanor arrests are of negroes, who comprise less than 8% of the total population of Cincinnati. This cannot be accounted for by the difference in color, but is very likely explained by the fact that the major part of the colored population of Cincinnati lives under those housing, recreational, and general environmental conditions which are now accepted as important contributing causes of crime.

Are Youths Committing the Crimes of Today?

What Is the Relation Between Misdemeanor Arrests and the Population of Cincinnati For Various Age Groups?

FIG. 4—MISDEMEANORS—Analysis of Arrests—By Ages
January 1 to June 30, 1929



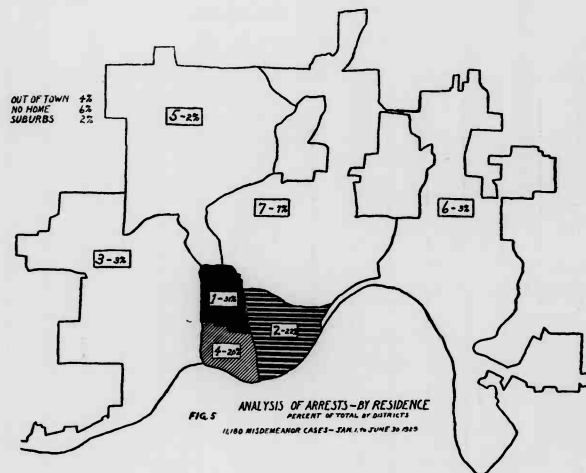
NOTE—The increase shown by the chart between the age 19 and 20 to 24 years is due mainly to the change in age grouping, from 1 to 5 years.

The curves in Figure 5 definitely show that the proportion of misdemeanor arrests at the younger ages is extraordinarily higher than the proportion of residents of Cincinnati at the same age. This confirms the general impression that crime is largely a problem of youth.

Between the ages of 20 and 30 the proportion of misdemeanor arrests to total arrests is nearly twice the proportion of the normal population in that age group. It is significant to note that after the age group 25 and 30, the proportion of misdemeanor arrests decreases at a much higher rate than the proportion of normal population. 42% of all the offenders are in the age group between 20 and 30.

Is the Residence of the Offenders Concentrated in One Section, Scattered Throughout the City, or Out of Town?

Does the Residence Suggest Any New Methods of Crime Prevention?

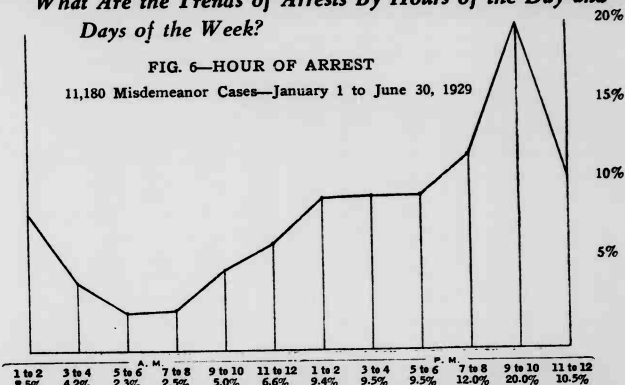


A study of the above chart shows that 73% of the arrests made were of offenders who live in what is known as the congested area or the residential downtown section, which constitutes about 35% of the population of Cincinnati, or 140,000 people. District Four is overwhelmingly colored and produces 20% of the offenders. The other two congested districts—One and Two—produce 53% of the total misdemeanor arrests. Of the total arrests only 12% were committed by those who reside out of the city or else have no home.

Districts One, Two and Four are tenement districts, with housing, recreational and general environmental conditions which are very conducive to crime. With these conditions remedied there would probably be a reduction in crime on the part of the residents of these districts.

What Are the Trends of Arrests By Hours of the Day and Days of the Week?

FIG. 6—HOUR OF ARREST
11,180 Misdemeanor Cases—January 1 to June 30, 1929

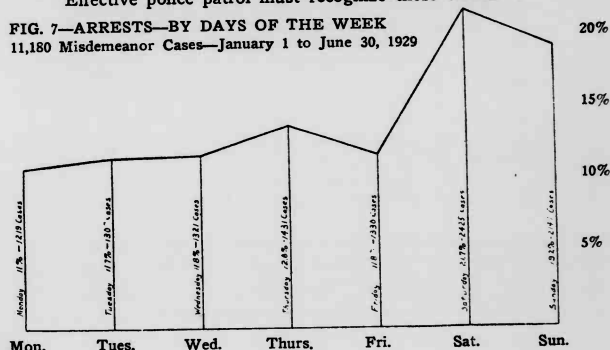


These charts are self-explanatory, showing clearly the upward trends during the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays. The offenses that produce these trends are mainly sex offenses, gambling, assault and battery, drunkenness, violating liquor laws, and disorderly conduct and vagrancy. The other offenses conform more or less with the general trends but are not the main factors that cause them.

An obvious conclusion that may be drawn from these graphs is that with leisure time there will be an increase in the number of misdemeanor offenses committed. The fact also remains that Saturday being pay day, it gives the individual a temporary surplus that is liable to get him in trouble.

Effective police patrol must recognize these trends.

FIG. 7—ARRESTS—BY DAYS OF THE WEEK
11,180 Misdemeanor Cases—January 1 to June 30, 1929

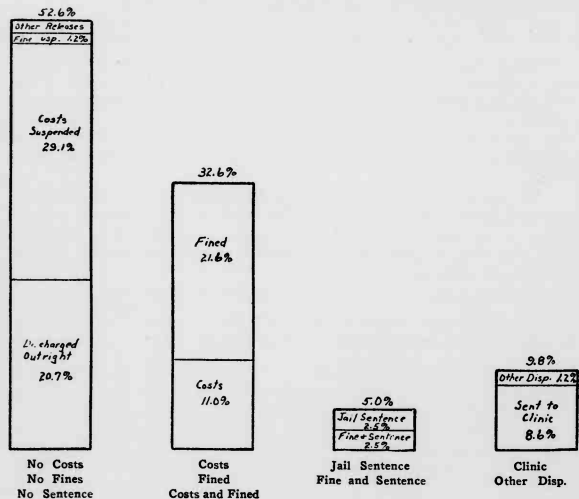


This Chart presents a picture. It raises the whole question of police and court procedure—a subject for very careful study. Conclusions will vary according to one's particular philosophy of criminal justice.

Without local inference, the following questions are asked: Are police arresting individuals who have not committed an offense? Or are police or prosecution failing to present properly the evidence? Or are the courts too lenient?

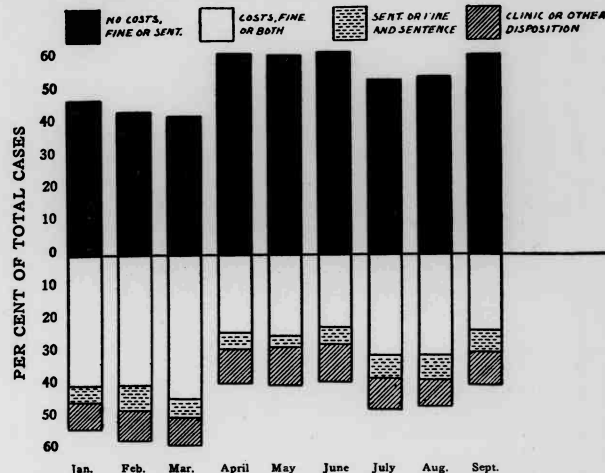
Is it to the best interest of crime prevention that offenders be fined, serve a sentence, probated or given other treatment?

FIG. 8—DISPOSITION OF CASES IN MUNICIPAL COURT
11,180 Misdemeanor Cases—January 1 to June 30, 1929



This chart shows that only a little over one-third of the cases are given a fine, costs, jail sentence or both. Over 50% of the cases pay no costs, fine or sentence. These cases are for the most part discharged outright—21%—or given costs suspended—29%.

FIG. 9—DISPOSITION OF CASES IN MUNICIPAL COURT—By months



Is There a Variation In the Disposition of Cases In Municipal Court According to Months?

What Are the Causes of the Variance of Dispositions From Month to Month?

There appears to be a decided variance in the dispositions from one three-month period to the next. For the first three months the "no costs, fine, or sentence" cases average 45% of the cases coming before the municipal courts, whereas for the next three months—April, May and June—they average 61%. For the next period the dismissals drop off to an average of 56%.

The cases receiving costs, fine, or both, show the same variations by periods. For the first three months these cases average 23% as compared with 23% for the next period. In July, August, September, the average for these cases increases to about 28%.

The other classifications of court dispositions show no trend or reactions.

This picture seems to point out the fact that the personal element of the trial judge is a large factor in the variance of dispositions. Judges sit for three month periods, except in cases of emergency and as was shown above, the variation is not in the individual months so much as it is in the different three month periods.

A Typical Case History

Juvenile Record

AGE	OFFENSE	DISPOSITION
9 years	Truant case	
9 "	Stealing pool balls.....	House of Refuge
10 "	Stealing cigarettes and candy.....	House of Refuge
11 "	Breaking in grocery store.....	House of Refuge
12 "	Stealing candy	House of Refuge
12 "	Breaking locks	Probated and sent out of town

Misdemeanor and Felony Record

18 years	Disorderly conduct	Cost suspended
18 "	Violating auto law	\$25 and cost
18 "	Violating auto law	\$25 and cost
18 "	Fugitive from justice.....	Dismissed
18 "	Disorderly conduct	Cost suspended
18 "	Disorderly conduct	Costs
18 "	Loitering	\$50 and cost suspended
18 "	Loitering	Cost suspended
19 "	Burglary	Ignored in Grand Jury
19 "	Having burglar tools.....	\$100 and cost suspended
19 "	Burglary	Case nolleed by Grand Jury
19 "	Assault to kill.....	Dismissed
20 "	Disorderly conduct	Dismissed
20 "	Disorderly conduct	Dismissed
20 "	Destruction of property.....	Dismissed
22 "	Disorderly conduct	Cost suspended
23 "	Speeding	\$50 and cost
23 "	Blowing siren	\$25 and cost
23 "	Possessing liquor	Dismissed
24 "	Disorderly conduct	Cost suspended
24 "	Reckless driving	Cost suspended
25 "	Burglary	Pending
25 "	Robbery	15 years in Ohio Penitentiary

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